

2004 Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS Housing Plan

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Executive Summary

Today, the housing and related service needs of people living with HIV/AIDS are as diverse as the population itself and the number of people requiring assistance continues to grow. Housing stability is elusive for many low-income people living with HIV/AIDS. Existing programs and systems must be expanded and revised to effectively meet these growing needs.

The City of Seattle, Human Services Department (HSD) is the regional grantee and coordinator of the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program, a program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD established the HOPWA program to address the specific housing-related needs of people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. HOPWA funding provides housing assistance and related support services as part of HUD's Consolidated Planning initiative, with a priority on permanent supportive housing. HUD encourages HOPWA grantees to develop community-wide strategies and form partnerships with area nonprofit organizations. HSD received approximately \$1.69 million in 2004 to provide housing and related services for people living with HIV/AIDS in King and Snohomish Counties.

In 2003, HSD and the local AIDS Housing Committee, made up of nonprofit agencies and government representatives, determined that better information was needed about the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in King County. As the local grantee for the HOPWA program, HSD launched a community-based needs assessment and planning process to develop a countywide HIV/AIDS housing strategy. Funding from both HUD's National HOPWA Technical Assistance Program and HSD supported the needs assessment and planning process.

The Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS housing needs assessment process provided more than 600 people living with HIV/AIDS and more than 150 other community stakeholders with the opportunity to share experiences, perspectives, and knowledge about housing resources for people living with HIV/AIDS. A diverse Steering Committee provided oversight and guidance for the needs assessment, identified critical issues, and developed recommendations to address HIV/AIDS housing and related service priorities in King County. The *2004 Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS Housing Plan* includes an overview of the critical issues in housing people living with HIV/AIDS and presents strategies to address those needs. The plan will provide guidance to the City of Seattle as HOPWA grantee to better assess and allocate HOPWA funds locally. It is intended that this plan be built upon, revised, and expanded as current objectives are met and new gaps and needs emerge.

Meeting the Housing Needs of People Living with HIV/AIDS

The first AIDS-dedicated housing in King County opened its doors more than twenty years ago, launching a revolutionary community commitment to support medically fragile persons living with AIDS in need of assisted living and end-of-life care. Two decades later, that commitment to housing persons living with AIDS remains, and a range of AIDS housing resources and related support programs have been created. However, the number of people living with HIV and AIDS has risen significantly—to approximately 8,400 in 2004—and people currently living with HIV/AIDS in King County face different life challenges, forcing the focus of the AIDS housing continuum to

expand beyond its original mission of serving those with the greatest AIDS-related medical needs. Some key facts and findings from the needs assessment include:

- HIV/AIDS has disproportionately affected African Americans/Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos.
- Women represent 9 percent of the total HIV/AIDS cases, a figure that has increased in recent years and is expected to continue rising.
- An estimated 10 percent of the HIV-infected residents of King County were born outside of the United States.
- Among focus group participants, a significant number had a history of homelessness or were at risk of homelessness. For many, housing instability and homelessness were factors in their lives prior to their diagnosis with HIV/AIDS.
- Of survey respondents, more than half had been homeless in the past, and one in three had been in jail or prison at some point in their lives.
- Median income for survey respondents was \$605 per month. Average rents for a one-bedroom apartment range from \$572 to more than \$1,000.
- Most survey respondents and focus group participants were receiving assistance in meeting their housing needs. Nearly one third of survey respondents indicated they were receiving some form of assistance, frequently HOPWA-funded, from Lifelong AIDS Alliance, and nearly half indicated that they were receiving housing assistance from the government or some other organization.

Today, housing and related services needs of people living with HIV/AIDS are more diverse and may not be specifically a result of a person's HIV infection. More consumers experience increasingly complex physical, emotional, and behavioral health issues and other challenges that impact their housing stability. When coupled with low incomes and a challenging housing market, as is the case in King County, housing stability becomes elusive. Given average rents in King County, these individuals are priced out of the rental market. Access to housing is further complicated by factors related to mental illness, substance use, chronic homelessness, histories of incarceration, immigration status, and language and cultural barriers. Housing and service providers are focusing more energy, time, and resources on populations that face multiple challenges in accessing or maintaining housing in addition to a lack of financial resources. Housing alone will not solve the underlying issues for many consumers. However, these underlying issues often cannot be addressed when an individual is not in stable housing.

In very general terms, there are those who enter the AIDS housing system because they have lost income and economic independence due to illness, and there are those who enter the system having had few personal or financial resources to begin with and for whom HIV/AIDS may not be their most immediate concern. To effectively house these diverse clients, case managers and service providers must have a broad range of skill and knowledge, and given the decreasing availability of services through related systems, meeting these needs is difficult and at times impossible. Housing people with complex lives presents significant challenges for HIV/AIDS and affordable housing providers. A lack of independent living skills limits the ability of some consumers to succeed in housing, and there are few programs providing independent living skills training. Ongoing case management, services, and social support are necessary components and critical gaps. As nonprofit housing providers partner with the AIDS system to house people living with HIV/AIDS with complex health and life challenges, gaps in these services are increasingly problematic.

Many AIDS housing resources have been developed through partnerships between the AIDS system and low-income housing developers and other nonprofit organizations. Partnerships with nonprofits have been crucial to extending the impact of available HOPWA dollars through leveraging other resources. In King and Snohomish Counties in 2003, every \$1 of local HOPWA funding leveraged more than \$5 of other funding to support rental assistance, operating costs, and housing development.

Vision for the Future

It is clear that the housing and related service needs of people living with HIV/AIDS cannot be addressed in a vacuum or through the resources of the HOPWA program alone. As the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS cross a range of service systems, partnerships will be essential to effectively meet diverse needs. The *2004 Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS Housing Plan* promotes a vision for the provision of services to all low-income residents of the county, regardless of HIV status. These vision statements reflect a broad community commitment within which the HIV/AIDS housing and related service system will be refined, enhanced, and further developed. In five to ten years in King County, there will be:

- A flexible, accessible, and responsive system of housing and services for people living with HIV and AIDS that helps prevent or postpone serious illness or disability
- A range of housing resources available to all low-income persons living with HIV and AIDS including those whose need is primarily financial and those who have multiple challenges to housing stability
- A community-wide, integrated continuum of housing and services based on strong collaborative relationships that is seamless and efficient for individuals and families seeking multiple supports
- A system that combines appropriate housing and ongoing service delivery tailored for individuals' needs, life circumstances, and stage of illness

The environment described by this vision will result in more efficient service delivery. Meeting the needs of the diverse population of people living with HIV/AIDS and other community members in need of assistance will be easier. Moving into the future, AIDS housing and services providers and advocates must join broad community planning efforts addressing affordable housing, homelessness, and related services and work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to advance this vision. Ensuring that the needs of all low-income residents are effectively addressed will increase the quality of life and housing stability of people living with HIV/AIDS.